DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 985 PS 026 257

TITLE	The State of Washington's Children. [Fifth Annual Report.]
SPONS AGENCY	Washington Univ., Seattle. Inst. for Public Policy and Management.; Washington Univ., Seattle. School of Public Health and Community Medicine.; Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.
PUB DATE	1996-09-00
NOTE	35p.; For 1994 Annual Report, see PS 026 255 and for 1995 Annual Report, see PS 026 256.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; Adolescents; Birth Weight; Births to Single Women; Child Abuse; *Child Health; Child Neglect; Delinquency; Demography; Dropout Rate; Early Parenthood; Economic Status; Elementary Secondary Education; Foster Care; Infant Mortality; Infants; Mortality Rate; One Parent Family; *Social Indicators; *State Surveys; Statistical Surveys; Substance Abuse; Trend Analysis; Unemployment; *Well Being
IDENTIFIERS	Firearms; *Indicators; Vaccination; *Washington

ABSTRACT

This Kids Count report examines statewide trends in the well-being of Washington's children. The statistical portrait is based on five general areas of children's well-being: family and community, economic well-being, health, education, and safety and security. The 17 key indicators of child well-being are: (1) births to unmarried mothers; (2) teen birth rate; (3) children not living with their fathers; (4) children living in out-of-home care; (5) child poverty; (6) unemployment; (7) low birthweight; (8) suicide; (9) HIV in childbearing women; (10) immunization; (11) public school enrollment; (12) student teacher ratio; (13) share students working; (14) child abuse referrals; (15) unintentional injury mortality; (16) firearm deaths; and (17) juvenile arrest rates. Results are presented as a state summary and track available data ranging from 1970 through 1994. Summary information, specific information, and a commentary are presented for each of the five general areas examined. The report shows improvement in infant mortality, unintentional injury fatalities, teen pregnancy and birth rates, prenatal care, immunization rates, fourth grade math scores, and student teacher ratios. However, worsening rates are evident in marijuana use, alcohol use, suicides, reading scores, homicides, and firearms deaths. (SD)

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The State of Washington's Children

SEPTEMBER 1996

REPORT

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The State of Washington's Children

SEPTEMBER 1996

This is the fifth annual report on *The State of Washington's Children*. It was produced by the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine in collaboration with the UW Human Services Policy Center. This report is part of the Washington Kids Count Project, which receives major funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

University of Washington
School of Public Health and Community Medicine

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 1996 *State of Washington's Children* represents the work of many individuals. Frederick A. Connell, director of the UW Maternal and Child Health Program, directs this project. Alice Porter, UW Center for Disability Policy and Research, is managing editor. Richard Brandon, executive director of the UW Human Services Policy Center, was responsible for sections of this report. Abhay Thatte, UW doctoral student in Urban Design and Planning, contributed valuable assistance. Ted Grichuhin was the programmer. Clarice Keegan was the desktop publisher. Sandy Johnson was the designer. Rachel Porter assisted in data entry and proof reading. Artwork was donated by elementary school students in the Seattle area.

In addition to major support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation (Kids Count), we greatly appreciate funding from the U.S. Public Health Service, the Boeing Company, the City of Seattle, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and Children's Hospital and Medical Center. As in past years, we have drawn valuable information from the adolescent health survey conducted for the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), DSHS, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The 1995 survey, which linked health-related behavior to family and community risk, was particularly useful, and we commend the agencies for continuing this effort. The following individuals provided data and guidance:

Caren Adams
Seattle-King County Department of Public Health

Shari Barney
Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Gordon Beck
OSPI

Cynthia Ellingson
DSHS Children and Family Services

Dennis Fusco
Office of Financial Management

David Hauntz
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Duncan MacQuarrie
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Ruth McDougall
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Rosalie McHale
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DSHS Office of Research and Data Analysis

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OSPI

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Enrico Yap
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THE STATE *of* WASHINGTON'S CHILDREN

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WASHINGTON'S CHILDREN

SUMMARY

This is the fifth report on *The State of Washington's Children*. As in the past, the report summarizes available information on the status of children in our state — their families and communities, the economic conditions under which they are growing up, their health, education, and safety.

Taken all together, the data in this report paint the most worrisome picture of the lives of the children in our state since the first *State of Washington's Children* report was published in 1991:

- Dramatic, tragic outcomes such as mortality from medical conditions, unintentional injuries, homicide, suicide, and firearms are rare occurrences in Washington. But we find that much, much greater numbers of children live in a state of risk, isolation, and despair. This reality is evidenced by high prevalence of poor health and safety behaviors, widespread failure of attachment to family, school, and community, and high reported rates of suicidal thinking, planning, and attempts.

- Although we continue to make progress in some areas, such as access to prenatal care, rates of teen pregnancy, and our students' performance on some educational test scores, we find that progress in many areas is stalling. The data in this report show that we are far from achieving acceptable levels of the indicators that we use to measure our children's health, education, safety, economic well-being, and family and community circumstances.

- Although childhood should be a time of nurtured growth and development within the safety of the home and community, we find that our children are growing up in a increasingly uncaring, threatening, and violent world. Across genders, races, neighborhoods, and socioeconomic status, too many Washington children of all ages are being exposed to inappropriate adult role models and insufficient adult protection.

This year's report shows that too many children in our state are growing up with diminishing opportunities, with inadequate encouragement, and with withering hope.

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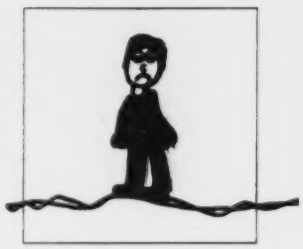
WASHINGTON'S CHILDREN

IN GREATER DANGER

This is the fifth annual report on *The State of Washington's Children*. As in the past, we have compiled from a variety of sources the most comprehensive and up-to-date data on the health and well-being of our state's children. Taken together, the data in this report paint the most worrisome picture we have presented since 1991, when we published our first report.

The most recent statistics suggest that we have stalled in our efforts to improve the health of our children. In the meantime, childhood poverty, violence, neglect, and alienation appear to be increasingly prevalent. As we approach the end of the 20th century, families have fewer resources with which to raise their children, safe neighborhoods are on the decline, public support for families is less certain, and children's programs continue to be threatened.



It is important to recognize that many of the indicators we use in this report are based on rare outcomes, especially fatal outcomes. It often takes the death of a child to capture public attention and stimulate the economy to act. But dramatic, rare outcomes may not be the best measure of how our children are doing. Although these events are assumed to represent the tip of an iceberg, what lies below the surface is not as well understood. It may be convenient to track deaths, but it is also important to place these events in perspective.

If we want our children to thrive, ... we must begin to focus our attention on the broad, common issues that affect large numbers of children.

The chart on Page 6 attempts to do this. In the left-hand side of the chart, we present the statistics we can monitor over time — the dramatic but rare failures of our stewardship. On the right are estimates of the underside of the "iceberg," the less dramatic but far more common events and conditions that characterize a much greater number of children in our state.

If our children are to thrive — and not just live — we must focus on the broad issues.

It is clear from this chart that the vast majority of children do not experience the severe, tragic outcomes we normally measure. For example, deaths in childhood — even in the first year of life — are very rare; 99.4% of newborns survive infancy, and of those, 99.3% live to celebrate their 20th birthdays. We — and the news media — tend to highlight and publicize the rare, dramatic outcomes on the left side of this chart, but we should not be overly focused on deaths, arrests, and other profound failings. While some children suffer these serious outcomes, many, many more live in the gray area of poverty, neglect, and despair. Many, many more suffer the consequences of poor health habits, social isolation, and chronic failure. If we want our children to thrive — not simply survive — we must begin to focus our attention on the broad, common issues that affect these large numbers of children.

THE BIGGER STORY

During 1996,

The Tip... of the ...	Iceberg
15 children will die from abuse or neglect.	85,000 reports of child abuse and neglect will be reported to Child Protective Services.
50 children will commit suicide.	11,000 children will make a suicide attempt serious enough to cause injury.
50 children will die from cancer.	55,000 children will smoke regularly.
75 children will be murdered.	2,800 will be arrested for violent crimes.
95 children will die from gunshot wounds.	11,000 children will carry a gun.
100 teenagers will die in car wrecks.	150,000 teenagers will drive with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.
450 newborns will die in the first year of life.	21,000 newborns will survive to live in poverty.
1,200 children will live in jail.	550,000 children will live in a home without sufficient economic resources to meet basic needs.
3,200 newborns will be born to school-age mothers.	22,000 newborns will be born to unwed mothers, and 27,500 children will experience the divorce of their parents.
10,000 children will live away from their parents.	350,000 children will not live in a two-parent home.

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THE TRENDS

As in the past, we have attempted to monitor trends in a variety of indicators. In several areas, we find evidence of improvement in the conditions of children in our state, but in each instance, progress needs to be qualified.

■ Infant mortality dropped in 1994, but improvement was the smallest in recent years.

■ The death rate from unintentional injuries among 15-19 year-olds plummeted, but the rate for children under 15 increased.

■ Teen birth rates are dropping, but there has been no appreciable change in the rate of low-birthweight babies.

■ More 2 year-olds are receiving all of their vaccinations on time, but 4 of 10 still are not immunized in a timely fashion.

■ 4th grade math scores have improved relative to the U.S. average, but 8th grade math scores have not improved.

■ Student-teacher ratios for kindergarten/elementary schools improved by 7% from 1984 to 1993, but this increase does not match the growth in the share of special needs children.

There are many indicators that are not improving. Indeed, several are getting worse.

Family and Community: While the indicators in this area are not getting worse, they are still at woefully high levels.

■ The share of births to unmarried mothers did not go up for the first time in many years, but more than a fourth of children in our state continued to be born out of wedlock in 1994.

■ The number of children in out-of-home care remained level in 1995, but placements were still at an all-time high.

Health: This year's report finds that we are beginning to lose ground in the progress we have made in improving the physical and mental health of children.

■ Childhood mortality from medical conditions has not improved since 1992. For adolescents,

What's Better . . .

- Infant mortality
- Unintentional injury fatalities among teens
- Teen pregnancy and birth rates
- Prenatal care use
- Immunization rates
- 4th grade math scores
- Student-teacher ratios

. . . What's Not

- Out-of-wedlock births *no improvement*
- Number of children in out-of-home care *no improvement*
- Mortality from medical conditions *no improvement*
- Marijuana use *worse*
- Alcohol use *worse*
- Suicide deaths *worse*
- Reading scores *no improvement or worse*
- Referrals to Child Protective Services *no improvement*
- Homicide deaths *worse*
- Firearms deaths *worse*

the 1994 mortality from medical conditions was comparable to the rate in 1984.

■ Marijuana use, binge drinking, and cigarette smoking among high school students have all increased, according to a 1995 school survey.

■ Among 10-19 year-olds, the suicide rate jumped in 1994 to 8.6 per 100,000 — up from 5.3 per 100,000 the year before.

Economic conditions: Based on available data, we estimate that the economic conditions of children in our state are not only shameful (which we have reported before), but they are still getting worse.

■ In 1989, nearly 35% of children in Washington lived in households that could not meet basic necessities. This is higher than in 1979 and much higher than in any other industrialized country.

■ Unemployment has increased from an average of 6.6% in 1986-90 to 6.9% in 1991-95, and the ratio of high- to low-paying jobs has dropped.

In the past decade, rates for domestic violence arrests, CPS referrals, arrests for violent offenses by adolescents, as well as homicide- and firearms-related deaths in teens have doubled, and in some cases, tripled.

Education: The educational system in Washington is straining to meet the growing set of demands placed on it by families, the health care system, and demographic trends. It is barely succeeding.

■ While math scores have improved for some age groups relative to the rest of the nation, reading scores have not improved.

■ School enrollment has been increasing and will continue to increase, but higher education capacity is not keeping up with this trend.

Safety and security: Nowhere in this report are the data more devastating than in the area of safety and security. Although we have recently made modest gains in the prevention of fatalities from unintentional injuries, the trends in the area of violence are appalling.

■ Referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) stayed level in 1995, but 58 referrals per 1,000 children is nearly the highest rate ever recorded.

■ In 1994, homicide deaths in children 15-19 years old climbed to a new high level.

■ In 1994, deaths of 15-19 year-olds from firearms also rose to an all-time high; nearly 1 of every 3 deaths in this age group involved a gun.

■ In the past 10 years, rates for domestic violence arrests, CPS referrals, arrests for violent offenses by adolescents, as well as homicide- and firearms-related deaths in teens have doubled, and in some cases, tripled.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

At a minimum, it is the responsibility of adults in a society to protect its children. Based on data in this report, it is clear that we are not doing a very good job. The trends described above monitor only the most serious outcomes; they do not give the complete picture. What about the vast majority of children who are not arrested or murdered, who do not commit suicide or die of diseases? How well are these children doing?

The following chart, based largely on perceptions of students in our state, gives us some idea of how well we are providing for and protecting our children at different stages of their lives.

At birth,

- 17% of newborns are born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy.
- 18% of newborns are born without the benefit of timely prenatal care.

By age 2,

- 40% of children have not received all of their immunizations.

By age 10 (4th grade),

- 44% of children are not reading at a basic level of comprehension.

By age 12 (6th grade),

- 15% of children personally know adults who sell or deal drugs.
- 21% have been physically abused or mistreated by an adult.
- 44% say it would be "easy" to obtain cigarettes.

By age 14 (8th grade),

- 15% of children carry a weapon for self-protection to use in a fight.
- 20% have seriously thought about attempting suicide.
- 24% would like to move from their neighborhoods.
- 74% say it would be "easy" to obtain beer, wine, or hard liquor.

At a minimum, it is the responsibility of adults in a society to protect its children. Based on the data in this report, it is clear that we are not doing a very good job.

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By age 16 (10th grade),

- 4% are carrying a gun to school.
- 8% have attempted suicide.
- 17% work at a job more than 10 hours a week.
- 18% have been sexually abused.
- 38% personally know adults who engage in criminal activities.
- 46% say it would be "easy" to obtain a handgun.

By age 18 (12th grade),

- 30% say their parents wouldn't know if they did not come home on time.
- 31% have left home for more than a night because they were depressed or upset.
- 34% ride in cars driven by someone who has been using alcohol or drugs.
- 43% personally know adults who sell or deal drugs.
- 48% work at a job more than 10 hours a week.
- 50% say it would be easy to get drugs such as cocaine, LSD, or amphetamines.
- 69% say they could skip school without their parents knowing.

In the 1990s, it is neither simple nor easy to be a child. Nor is it easy to be a parent.

In the 1990s, it is neither simple nor easy to be a child. Nor is it easy to be a parent. While it is commonplace to say that it is up to parents to take care of our state's children, the reality is that parents are increasingly isolated, economically stressed, stretched between work and family, and without adequate support from relatives, neighbors, and public programs.

We believe that our children — and our future — are in trouble. We must all pitch in. They are our children. They are our future.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Families and neighborhoods are the environments, the soil, in which our children grow. Children depend on parents and neighbors for protection, direction, and support.

A recent survey of Washington students shows that school children with supportive communities and families are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior, to drink alcohol, to smoke, or to take drugs. Children who live in dysfunctional families or disorganized neighborhoods are at far greater risk for these undesirable behaviors.

Recent data suggest that some of the trends that had been worsening over the past few years have leveled-off, albeit at highly unsatisfactory levels.

- The proportion of births to unmarried women is beginning to stabilize after rising steadily for the past 25 years.
- Teen pregnancy and birth rates have begun to decline.
- The number of children in out-of-home care has been rising proportionate to the increase in the number of children in the state.

Nevertheless, recent information from the 1995 Washington student survey plainly shows that the current state of families in Washington should concern us all. For example, among 8th-graders:

- 1 in 3 does not feel comfortable asking *either* parent for help with a personal problem;
- 1 in 4 personally knows adults who engage in illegal activities;
- 1 in 5 does not enjoy spending time with his or her parents

Key Indicators	Then	Now	Trend
Births to Unmarried Mothers	26.3% (1993)	26% (1994)	No Change
Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000 15-17 Year-olds)	30.8 (1993)	29.6 (1994)	Better
Percent of Children Not Living with Father			
6th Grade		30.2%	NA
12th Grade		35.9% (1995)	NA
Children Living in Out-of-Home Care	9,637 (1994)	9,684 (1995)	No Change

Today's parents are increasingly likely to be bringing up their children alone, and trends predict that the ability of parents to support their children adequately is likely to get worse. Poverty, limited education and employment opportunities, and the decline of social and public supports all conspire to make it increasingly difficult for parents to nurture and protect their children.

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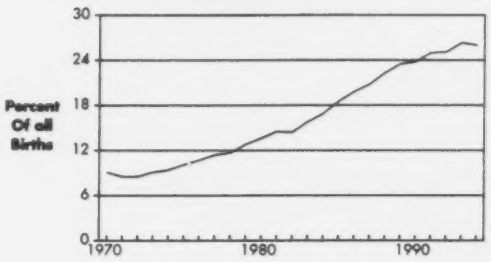
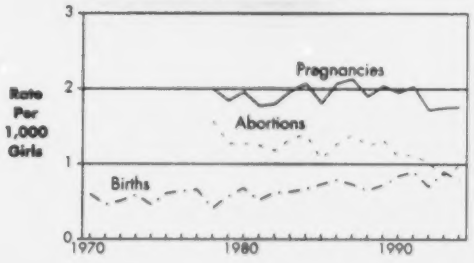
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Since 1970, births to unmarried women in Washington have risen steeply, increasing from 1 of every 11 births in 1970 to more than 1 of 4 in 1994. Recent years have seen a slight decline in the rate of births to school-age girls, but more pregnant girls from 10 to 17 years old are choosing to carry their babies to term rather than undergo abortions. In the past four years, the number of children in Washington's out-of-home care system — children who cannot live with their own families and are placed in foster care, with relatives, and in other arrangements — has not increased significantly.

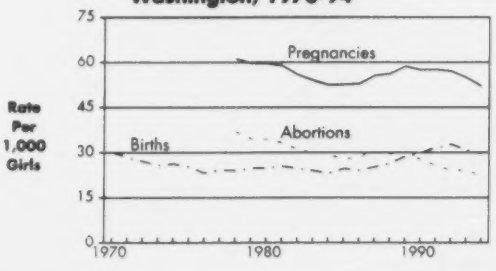
Births to Unmarried Mothers
Washington, 1970-94



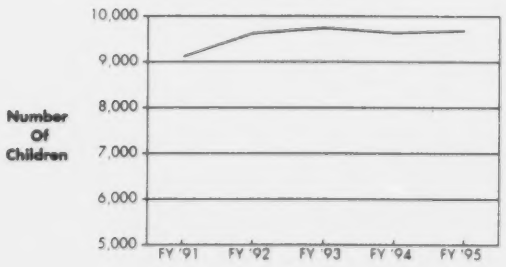
Pregnancy, Abortion, and Birth Rates
Among 10-14 Year-olds
Washington, 1970-94



Pregnancy, Abortion, and Birth Rates
Among 15-17 Year-olds
Washington, 1970-94



Children in Out-of-home Care
Washington, 1991-95



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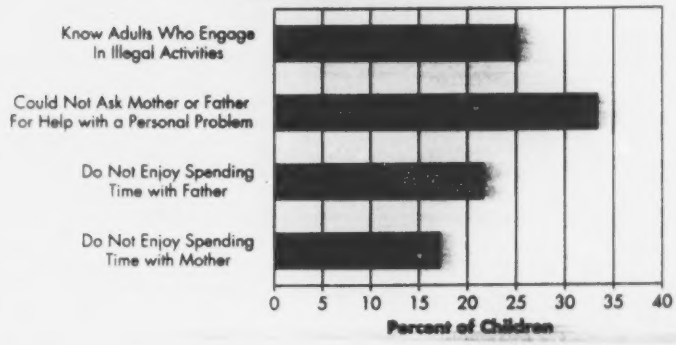
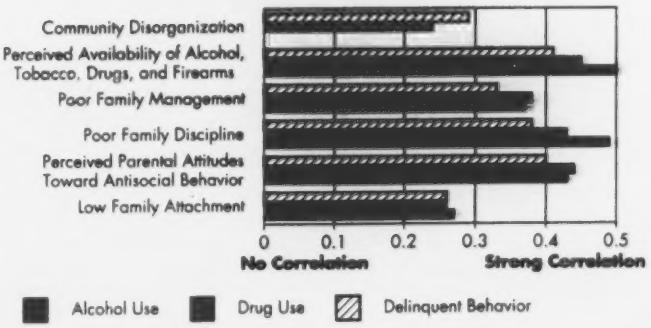
What 8th-graders Say About Their Parents and Other Adults Washington, 1995


Know Adults Who Engage In Illegal Activities
Could Not Ask Mother or Father For Help with a Personal Problem
Do Not Enjoy Spending Time with Father
Do Not Enjoy Spending Time with Mother
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40
Percent of Children

• According to a recent state survey, about 1 of every 4 8th-graders in Washington knows adults who engage in illegal activities, and 1 of 3 would not ask parents for help with a personal problem. A significant share of children do not enjoy spending time with their parents.

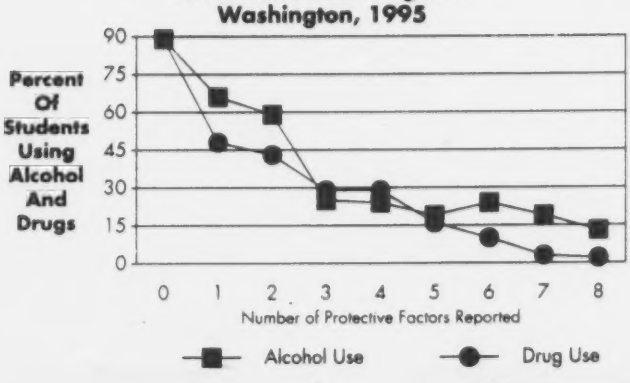
Community and Family Factors Correlated with Antisocial Behaviors Washington, 1995



• The school survey found that risk factors related to both family and community were highly correlated with undesirable youth behaviors, such as drinking, drug use, and delinquency.

• Perceived availability of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, firearms — a community factor — was most strongly associated with students engaging in drug and alcohol use.

Impact of Protective Factors On Alcohol and Drug Use Washington, 1995



• Positive influences in a child's life can help prevent antisocial behaviors.

• Those students who reported having just three or more protective factors, such as having opportunities and getting recognition for constructive involvements, were the least likely to drink or use drugs.

• Nearly 90% of students who reported no protective factors used alcohol or drugs.

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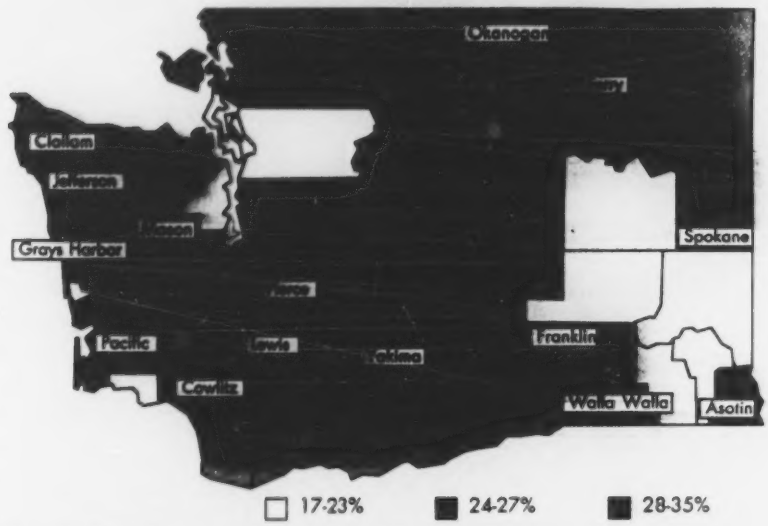
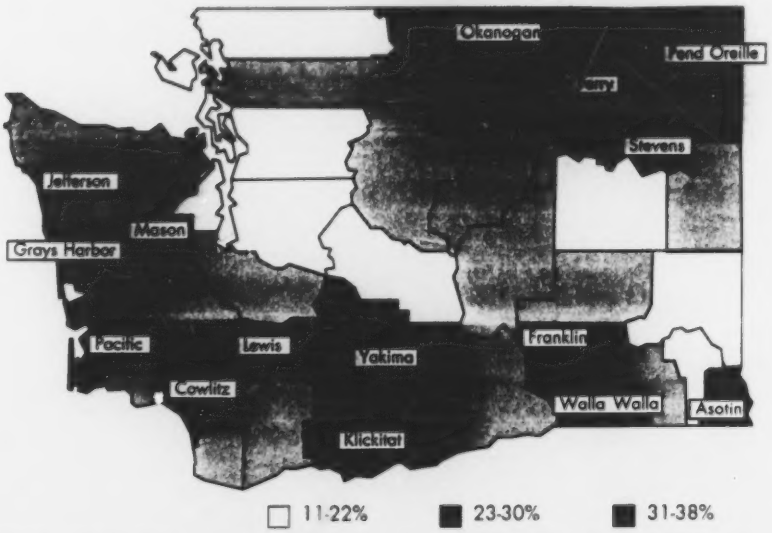
Percent of Children Not Living in Two-Parent Families
Washington, 1990



In many Washington counties, 1 in 3 children grows up without the benefit of two parents at home. These counties tend to be those with the highest child poverty rates.

Percent of Births to Unmarried Women
Washington, 1992-94



Most Washington counties with high proportions of children growing up in single-parent households also have high rates of births to single women. In addition, counties with the highest rates of out-of-wedlock births have high rates of teenagers dropping out of school and low rates of adults with college degrees. These relationships hold even after adjusting for poverty levels in these counties.

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ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Working families in Washington are caught in a squeeze.

More than 1 of every 3 children lives in a family that cannot meet the basic necessities — food, housing, health care, and child care — without assistance. Many children live in families where the parents work in the low paying service or agricultural sectors, where average earnings are less than $20,000 a year, well below the $24,000 it takes to support a family of three.

■ Families are working more. About 60% of mothers with young children are working, and many parents work at two jobs or double shifts. About 92% of children have at least one working parent. Only 2% of children in two-parent families have no employed parent.

■ The shortfall is seen in the fact that 25% of children — 1 of 4— receive some form of economic assistance from the state Department of Social and Health Services. In some counties, the share is as high as 50%.

■ On average, families spend 20% of their take-home pay on child care for each child; for low income parents, child care costs consume from 25% to 30% of family income.

■ There is a large gap between the incomes of White families with children and African American, Hispanic, and Native American families with children. Unfortunately, these gaps have continued to grow.

Washington state has limited policies to assist the working poor, including the Basic Health Plan and Medicaid coverage. Federal assistance to working families is threatened. This means that more children will face deprivation unless wages and benefits increase substantially or the state finds better ways to assist with child care, housing, and transportation costs.

Key Indicators	Then	Now	Trend
Official Child Poverty Rate			
White	10.2%	11.4%	Worse
Hispanic	24.7%	29.6%	Worse
	(1979)	(1989)	
"Hidden Poor" Children	18.8%	20%	Worse
Total Poor Children	30.8%	34.5%	Worse
Unemployed Workers, WA 5-year Average	6.6% (1986-90)	6.9% (1991-95)	Worse

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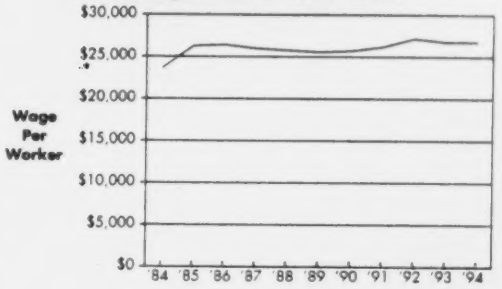
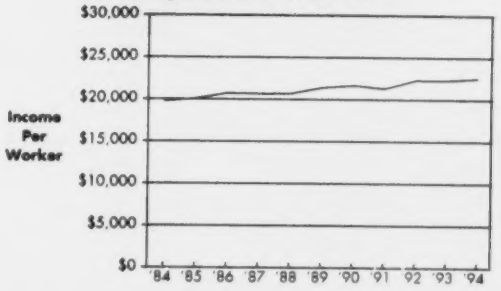
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Washington families are losing economic ground. Inflation-adjusted average wages were actually lower in 1994 than they were in 1992. Real per capita income in the state has increased by less than 6% in the past five years. Part of the reason for this is that high-wage jobs (including manufacturing, transportation, and communication) are accounting for a diminishing share of Washington jobs, while the share of jobs in the lower-wage sectors (including agriculture, forestry, and retail trade) is increasing. In 1994, the average wage in the low-wage sectors was $19,762; it was $35,376 in the high-wage sectors. It costs about $24,000 a year to support a family of three, and $26,000 to support a family of four. Meanwhile, the state has experienced a dramatic slowdown in employment growth since the late 1980s.

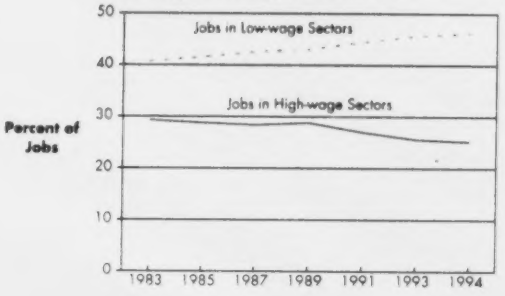
Average Wage Per Worker in 1994 Dollars
Washington State, 1984-1994



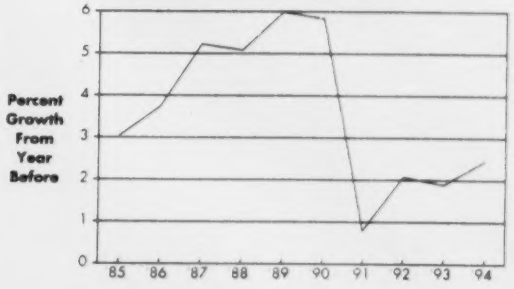
Annual Per Capita Income in 1994 Dollars
Washington State, 1984-1994



Share of High- and Low-wage Jobs
Washington State, 1983-1994



Annual Growth in Total Employment
Washington State, 1985-1994



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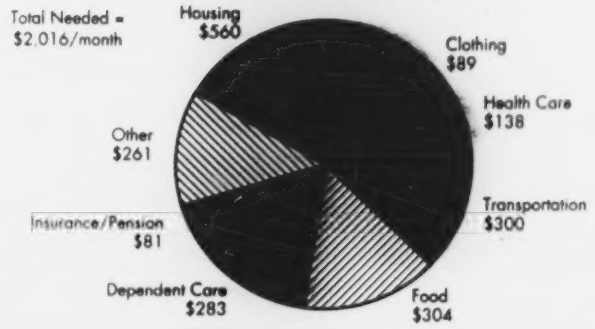
Estimated Minimum Monthly Expenses For a Family of Three Washington, January 1996

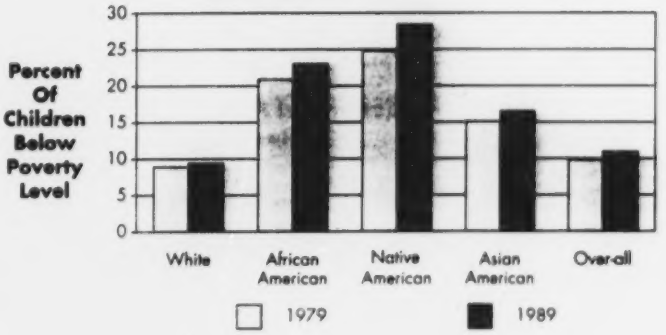


• A full-time worker must now earn $11.80 per hour to provide the basic necessities for a family of three. More than 1 of every 3 children is growing up in a family with income below this minimum level.

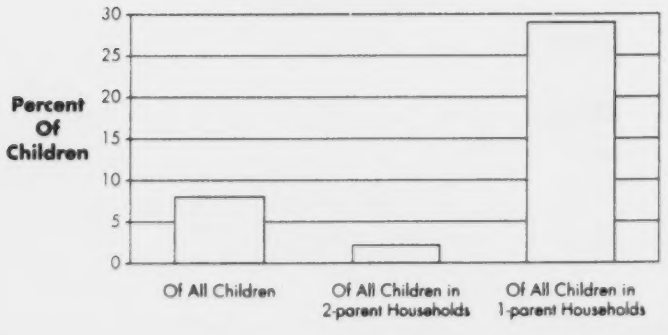
• The over-all share of Washington children living in poverty increased by more than 11% during the 1980s.

• African American and Native American children are more than twice as likely as White children to live below the federal poverty line.

Share of Children Living in Poverty By Race and Ethnicity Washington, 1979-89



Percent of Children Ages 0-17 Years Living in Households with No Employed Parent Washington, 1990



• Nearly 1 of every 12 Washington children lives in a household with no employed parent. Nearly 3 of every 10 Washington children who are growing up in single-parent families have no employed parent at home.

• High school students make a major contribution to the family economy. About 1 in 6 10th-graders, and nearly half of all 12-graders, work at a job for more than 10 hours per week.

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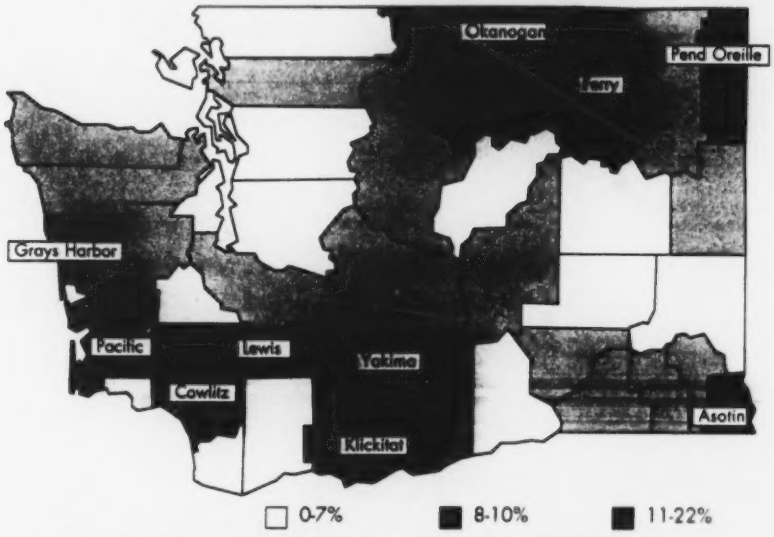
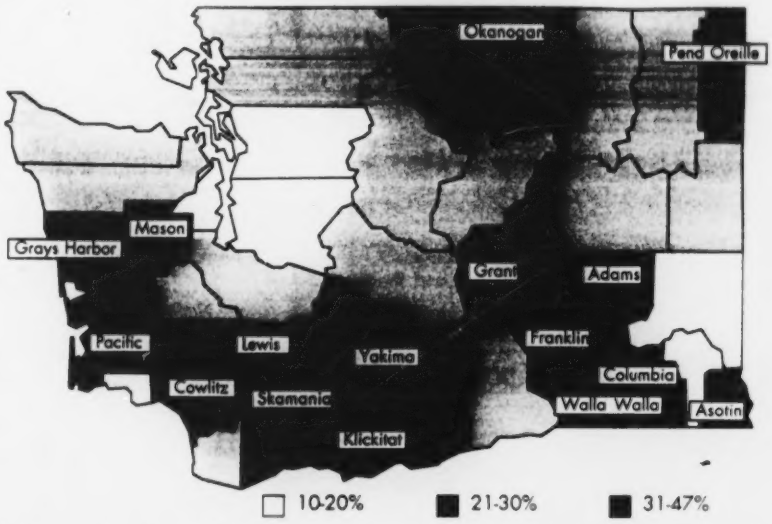
Percent of Children Without an Employed Parent
Washington, 1990



High rates of parental unemployment are found in many rural Washington counties, particularly in the southwest and northeast parts of the state.

Estimated Percent of Children Ages 0-17 Years
Receiving Economic Assistance
Washington, 1994



Not surprisingly, high levels of state economic support services are found in many of the same counties with high levels of parental unemployment. In some counties, more than 1 of every 3 children receives public assistance.

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HEALTH

In the past, health-related statistics were some of the brightest spots in *The State of Washington's Children*. This year, the health news is not so good.

- While the First Steps Program appears to be helping more women start their prenatal care early, there has been no corresponding decline in the low-birthweight rate.
- We have made little progress in reducing smoking during pregnancy, a known hazard to both mothers and babies. In some Washington counties, nearly a third of pregnant women smoke.
- Although we continue to make progress in reducing infant mortality, the rate of improvement is slowing down.
- Childhood mortality from diseases, which had been declining in the 1970s and '80s, was the same in 1994 as in 1991. For adolescents, the 1994 rate is the same as in 1980.
- In 1994, there was a dramatic increase in teen suicides. The number of suicide deaths for 15-19 year-olds jumped from 28 in 1993 to 50 in 1994.
- The number of delivering women found to be HIV-positive continues to increase.

Perhaps most distressing of all is the new information on the health habits of our children. A substantial portion of high school students are overweight, under-exercised, and under-slept. Most of these problems become more common as students progress through high school. Furthermore, according to a recent survey, the percent of children who smoke, drink, and use marijuana increased significantly between 1992 and 1995.

Key Indicators	Then	Now	Trend
Low Birthweight Rate	5.2% (1993)	5.3% (1994)	No Change
Suicide Mortality (Deaths per 100,000 10-19 Year-olds)	5.3 (1993)	8.6 (1994)	Worse
HIV Seroprevalence in Childbearing	36 Cases (1989-90)	60 Cases (1993-94)	Worse
2 Year-olds Fully Immunized	56% (1991)	60.4% (1992)	Better

Not only have we stalled in our progress toward improving the health of our children, we are also producing a new generation of unhealthy young adults whose health habits — learned in childhood — are likely to cause undesirable consequences for decades to come.

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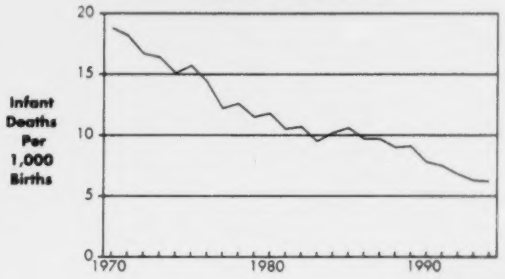
Monitoring the trends...

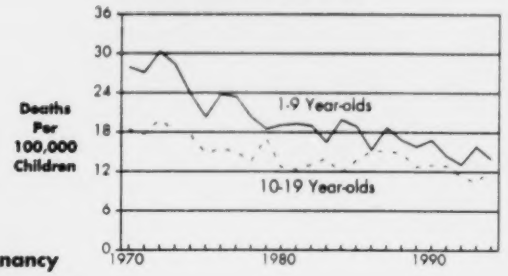
HEALTH

Since 1970, we have made great progress in reducing infant mortality and the rate of children's deaths due to medical conditions. These improvements, however, appear to be leveling off. Although more Washington women are beginning prenatal care in a timely fashion, we have stalled in reducing the share of babies born low birthweight. Suicide rates for children 10-19 years old are beginning to climb again after dropping since the late 1980s.

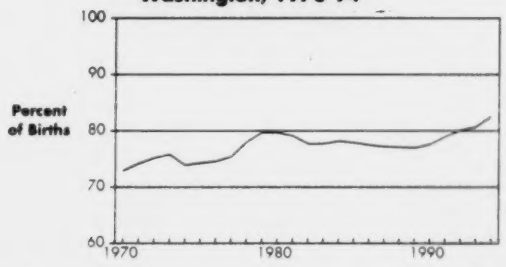
Infant Mortality
Washington, 1970-94



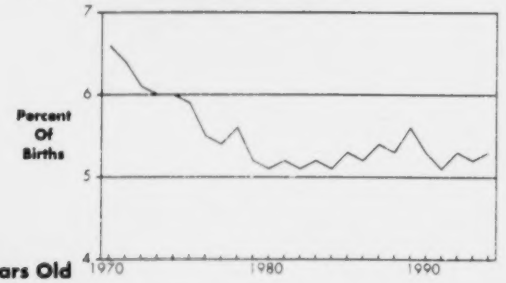
Childhood Mortality from Medical Conditions
Washington, 1970-94



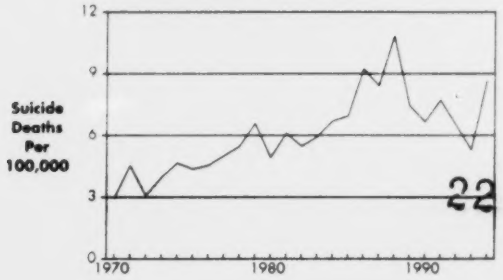
Prenatal Care Begun
During First Three Months of Pregnancy
Washington, 1970-94



Low Birthweight Rate
Washington, 1970-94



Suicide Rates for Children 10-19 Years Old
Washington, 1970-94



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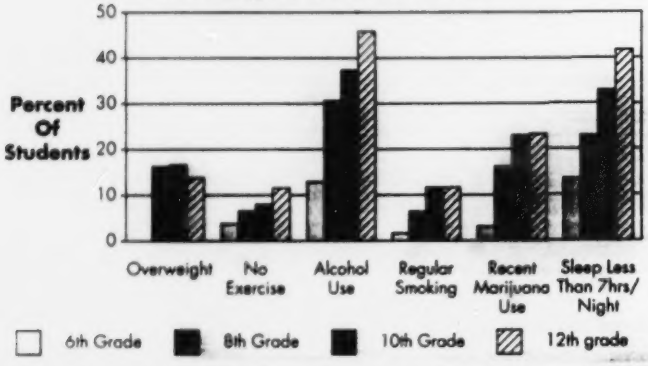
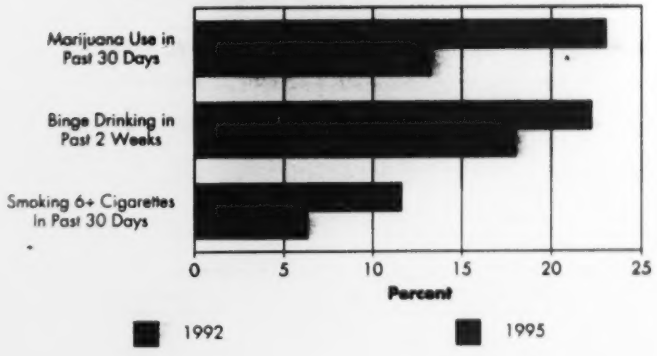
Unhealthy Behaviors
Washington Students, 1995



• Unhealthy behaviors increase during adolescence, most dramatically between 6th and 10th grade.

• By the 12th grade, about 1 of every 7 students in Washington is overweight; 1 in 9 does not exercise; and 1 in 10 smokes regularly. Also, half of 12th-graders sleep less than seven hours on school nights.

Trends in Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use
Among Washington 10th-graders, 1992 and 1995



• From 1992 to 1995, self-reported smoking, drinking, and marijuana use increased markedly among 10th-graders.

• Early use of these substances can cause acute health effects.

Children with Disabilites by Age and Gender
United States, 1992

• Disabilities in children may result in substantial reductions in quality of life and increased long-term dependency on health and social service systems.

• National data show that disability in children increases with age and that boys are more likely than girls to experience disability.

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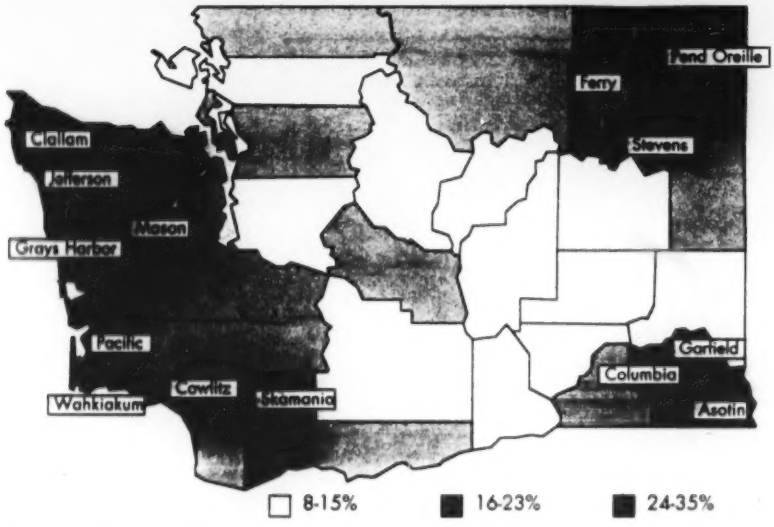
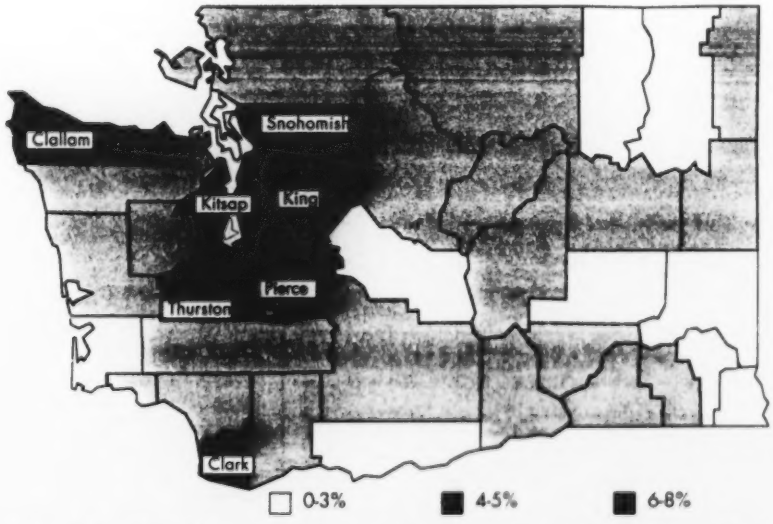
Percent of Births Where Mother Smoked
Washington, 1994



Smoking is widely known to be a hazard during pregnancy. In 1994, despite a large maternity care program in Washington, 17% of pregnancies were complicated by maternal smoking, nearly the same share as in 1990. In some — particularly rural — counties, this share approached a third.

Asthma Admissions as a Percent of All Pediatric Admissions
Washington, 1990-94



Asthma is one of the most common chronic conditions in children and is responsible for about 1 of every 16 hospital admissions among children 0-19 years old. Urban counties tend to have both the highest rates and the highest proportions of asthma admissions. This may reflect both better access to hospital care as well as higher rates of asthma in urban areas.

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EDUCATION

We face many challenges in providing a good education for our children, and many of the indicators in this report show that we are not meeting many of these challenges very well. While some children in our state are getting the best education ever offered, from their earliest years to postgraduate education, the great majority are getting an education that is at best, mediocre. Currently, 44% of fourth grade students fail to read at a basic level of comprehension, and only about 16% of high school students express a strong desire to go to college.

This is not just a problem with our schools; parents are not staying involved. More than half of parents say they are not involved with their children's education by high school.

■ More than a third of high school students say their parents do not ask if they have done their homework; two-thirds say their parents would not notice if they skipped school.

■ We now know that learning begins at birth, and children need a combination of secure surroundings and cognitive stimulation to develop their potential. More than half of children ages 0-6 are in some form of child care, but only a small percentage of child care facilities meet national accreditation standards.

■ Our public schools have one of the worst student-teacher ratios in the nation. As our population continues to grow, we will have to add more than 4,000 teachers in the next five years just to stay where we are. To reach the national average, we would have to add more than 14,000 teachers.

Key Indicators	Then	Now/Projected	Trend
WA Public School Enrollment			
K-8	674,548	738,734	NA
Grades 9-12	277,148	320,667	
	(1995)	(2001)	
WA Student-Teacher Ratio			
Elementary Kindergarten	21.4	19.8	Better
Secondary	22.6	22.5	Better
Over-all	22	20.9	Better
	(1984)	(1993)	
Share Students Working > 10 Hours per Week			
10th Graders	16.8%	17%	No Change
12th Graders	48.5%	47.6%	
	(1992)	(1995)	

The State of Washington has a major education reform movement underway, but it will take years of work in each school district before schools offer a wide range of options to fit different students' needs and learning styles, and to allow all students to achieve at a high level of performance.

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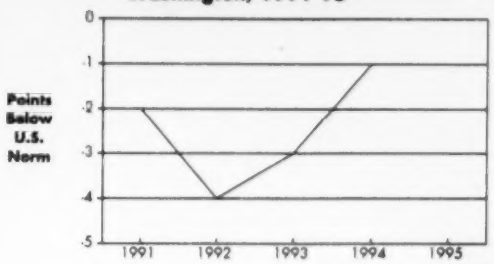
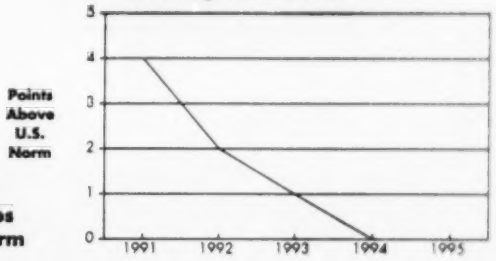
EDUCATION

Washington state public school 4th-graders have returned to slightly below the national average on math scores, after falling substantially below that average in the early 1990s. During the same period, 4th grade reading scores have declined from well above the national average to just equal to that average. The state's 8th-graders perform several points above the national mean in math. But 8th grade reading has dropped closer to the national average. Meanwhile, the number of children in special education at all grades is rising. Today, more than 1 of every 9 Washington students is enrolled in a special education program.

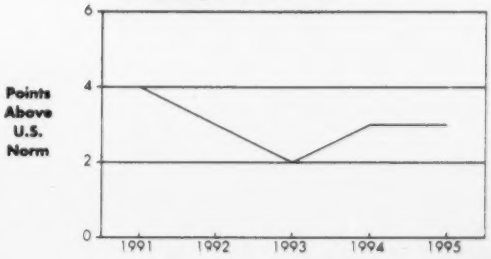
Public Schools' 4th Grade Math Scores
Percentage Points Below National Norm
Washington, 1991-95



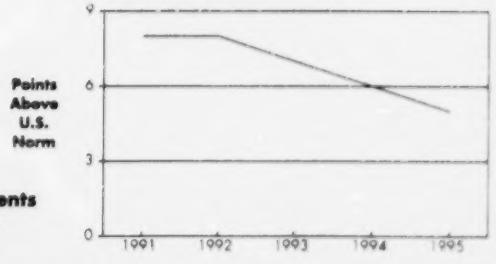
Public Schools' 4th Grade Reading Scores
Percentage Points Above National Norm
Washington, 1991-95



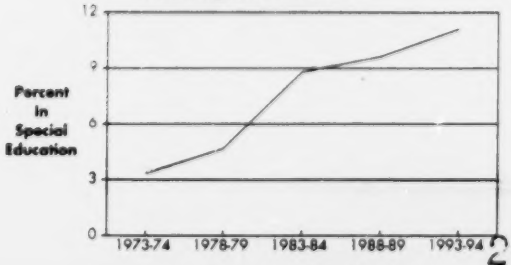
Public Schools' 8th Grade Math Scores
Percentage Points Above National Norm
Washington, 1991-95



Public Schools' 8th Grade Reading Scores
Percentage Points Above National Norm
Washington, 1991-95



Percentage of Public School Students
Enrolled in Special Education
Washington, 1973-94



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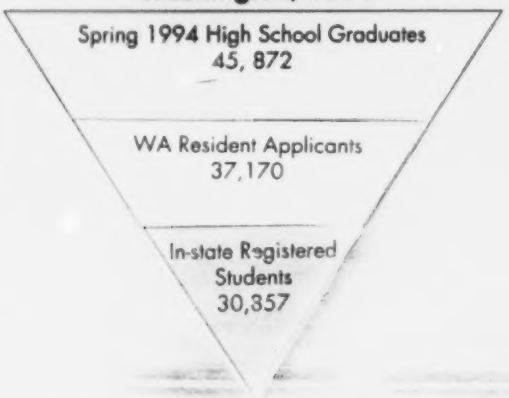
High School Graduates and Unmet College Need
Washington, 1994



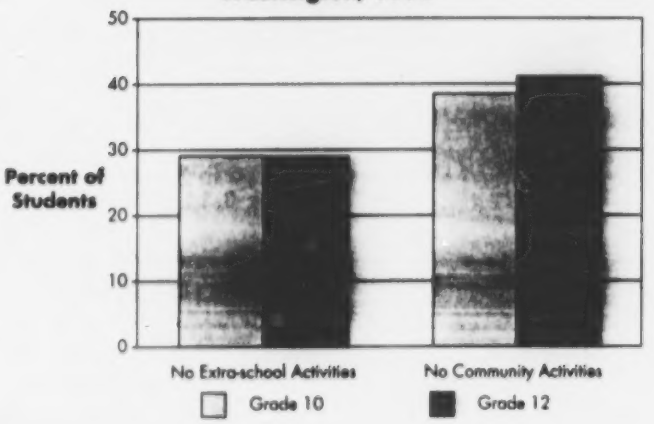
• We are falling behind in providing access to higher education. Only about 16% of high school students report that they very much want to go to college, though many more actually do.

• More than 6,000 Washington resident college applicants in 1994 were not accepted in Washington colleges or universities. Of these, more than 1,750 were not able to arrange any college admission.

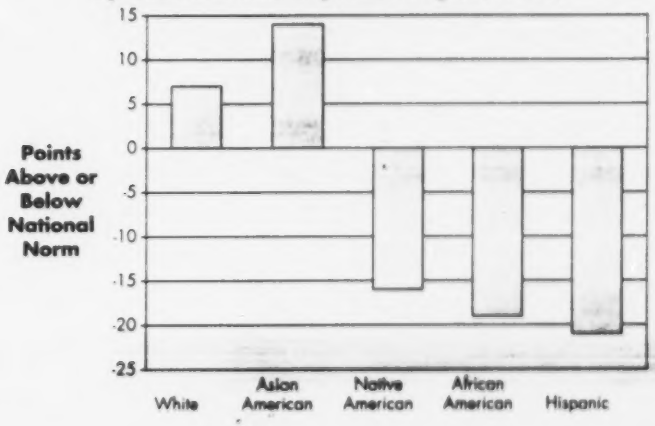
• Extra-curricular activities enhance both school performance and attachment to community.

• About 29% of high school students say they do not participate in such extra-school activities as sports and music. And 40% report that they do not participate in community activities such as scouts, church groups, or sports leagues.

Percent of High School Students
Who Do Not Participate in Extra Activities
Washington, 1994



8th Grade Math Scores
Percentage Points Above or Below National Norm
By Race and Ethnicity, Washington, 1995



• Although White and Asian American students in Washington score well above the national norm in math, other ethnic groups seriously lag behind the national average.

• Washington girls scored an average of 6 percentage points, and boys scored an average of 2 points, above the national norm in math proficiency in 1995.

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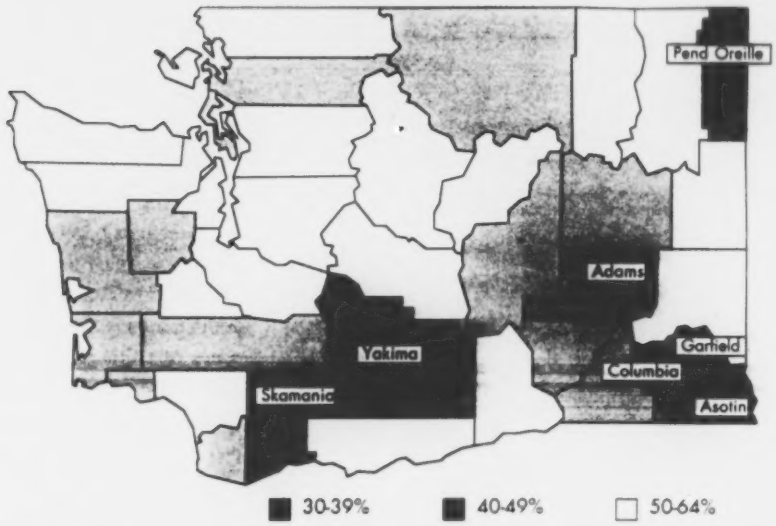
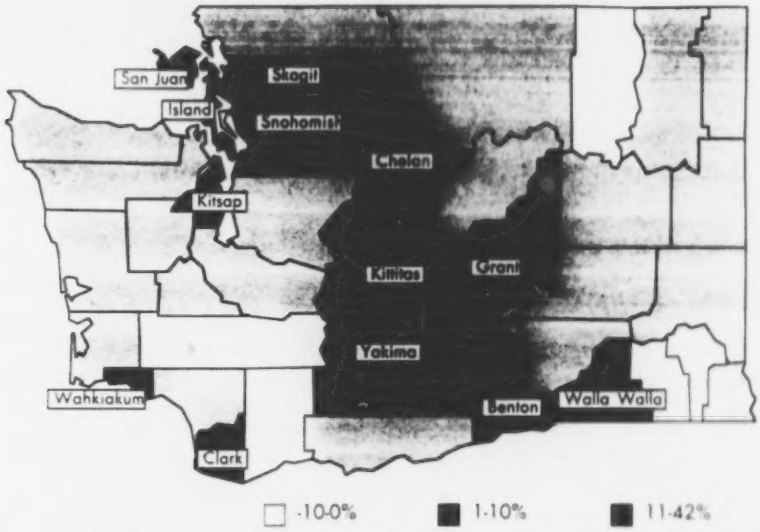
Average Math Scores of 11th Grade Students By Percentile Washington, 1995



In 7 of Washington's 39 counties, 11th graders scored on average below the 40th percentile on standardized math tests.

Percent Increase in Projected Public School Enrollment Grades 9-12, Washington, 1996-2001



Several Washington counties are anticipating steep growth in high school enrollment during the next five years. But in five small counties, high school enrollment is expected to drop. In general, high school enrollment declines are expected in small rural counties with weak economies.

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SAFETY AND SECURITY

Perhaps nowhere is Charles Dickens's "best of times, worst of times" description more appropriate than in the area of child safety. Over the past three decades, the rate of fatalities from unintentional injury — the most common cause of death of children — has dropped by nearly two-thirds, a remarkable achievement.

During the same time, however, death rates from violence — homicide and suicide — have more than doubled. In just the past 10 years, we have witnessed an unprecedented growth in recognition and occurrence of violent behaviors that affect youth in our state.

- Domestic violence arrest rates have increased by 140%.
- The rates of reported child abuse and neglect have increased by 180%.
- The rate of juvenile arrests for violent offenses has increased by 165%.
- The rate of homicide deaths among children 15-19 years old has increased 240%.

In no other area, however, has the scourge of violence been more evident that in the epidemic of deaths due to guns.

- Between 1997 and 1994, the rate of deaths attributable to firearms increased from 9.7 to 21.8 per 100,000 children 15-19 years of age.
- In 1994, firearms were implicated in 30.5% of *all* fatalities in this age group, making guns the most common agent of death among teenagers in our state.

There is much that can be done to make Washington a safer place for children. Curbing access to guns is only one, albeit vital, component. We must continue to educate our youth in safety-related behaviors. And, we must all recognize that violence is neither rare nor confined to certain groups; it crosses generations, races, age groups, genders, and neighborhoods.

Key Indicators	Then	Now	Trend
Child Abuse Referrals (per 1,000 children < 17)	59 **(1994)**	58 **(1995)**	No Change
Unintentional Injury Mortality (deaths per 100,000)			
Children 0-14	9.6	10.9	Worse
Children 15-19	46.3 **(1993)**	28.2 **(1994)**	Better
Percent of Deaths Due to Firearms (15-19 Year-olds)	23% **(1993)**	30% **(1994)**	Worse
Juvenile Arrest Rates (per 1,000 10-17 Year-olds)	75.8 **(1983)**	94.9 **(1994)**	Worse

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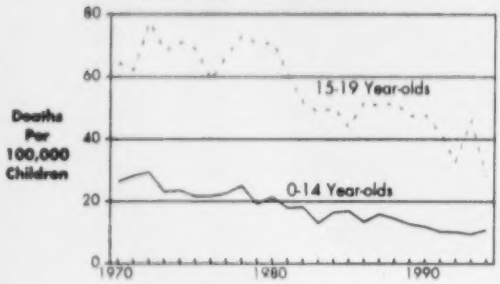
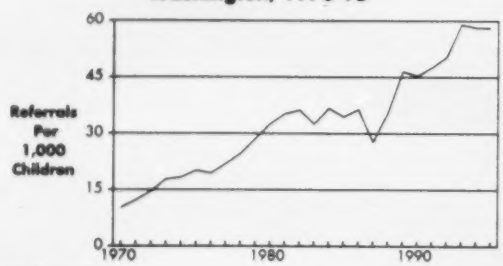
SAFETY AND SECURITY

Washington children are less likely to die from accidents but more likely to experience intentional harm. In 1970, barely 10 of every 1,000 Washington children were referred to the state's Child Protective Services agency; by 1995, the rate had increased to more than 58 of every 1,000 children. During the 1990s, the rate at which 15-19 year-olds die from homicide has more than doubled. And the death rate from firearms has also risen steadily. Since 1987, the average daily population in state Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration institutions and community placements has nearly doubled.

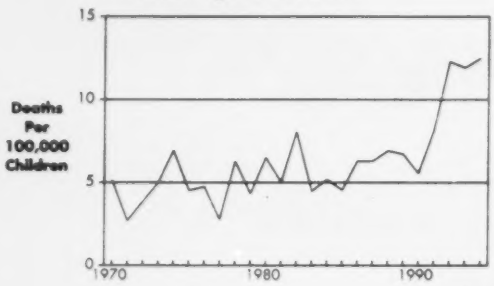
Deaths from Unintentional Injuries
Washington, 1970-94



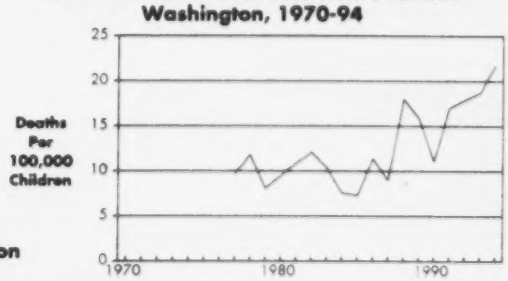
Referrals of 0-17 Year- olds to CPS
Washington, 1970-95



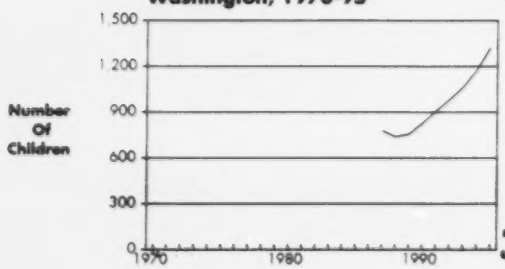
Homicide Mortality of Children 15-19 Years
Washington, 1970-94



Deaths of 15-19 Year-olds from Firearms
Washington, 1970-94



Average Daily JRA Population
Washington, 1970-95



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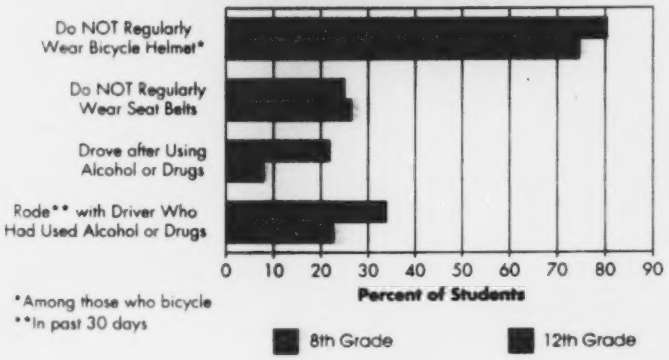
Safety-related Behaviors
Washington Students, 1995

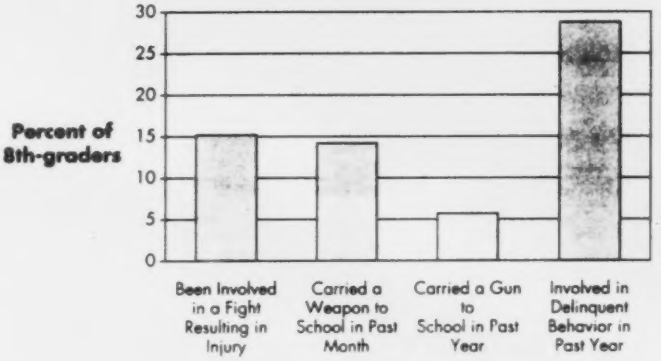

Do NOT Regularly Wear Bicycle Helmet*
Do NOT Regularly Wear Seat Belts
Drove after Using Alcohol or Drugs
Rode** with Driver Who Had Used Alcohol or Drugs
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
Percent of Students
*Among those who bicycle
**In past 30 days
8th Grade
12th Grade

• Motor vehicles kill more children than does any other cause. A large share of high school students drive when they have been drinking or ride with drivers who have.

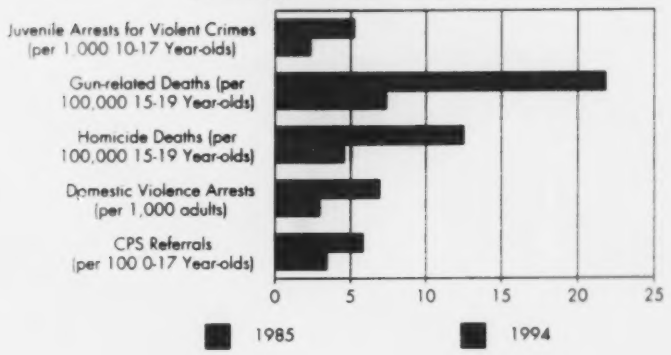
• About 1 in 4 students uses bicycle helmets and only about 3 of 4 regularly use seatbelts.

• The strongest predictor of violence in adolescence is early initiation of problem behaviors. By 8th grade, students report a high prevalence of serious fighting, weapons-carrying, and delinquency.

Violence-related Behaviors
Washington Students, 1995



Increase in Violence
Washington, 1985 to 1994


Juvenile Arrests for Violent Crimes (per 1,000 10-17 Year-olds)
Gun-related Deaths (per 100,000 15-19 Year-olds)
Homicide Deaths (per 100,000 15-19 Year-olds)
Domestic Violence Arrests (per 1,000 adults)
CPS Referrals (per 100 0-17 Year-olds)
0 5 10 15 20 25
1985
1994

• Manifestations of violence have escalated during the past decade. Washington state has experienced nearly a twofold increase in child abuse referrals and an even greater increase in domestic violence arrests.

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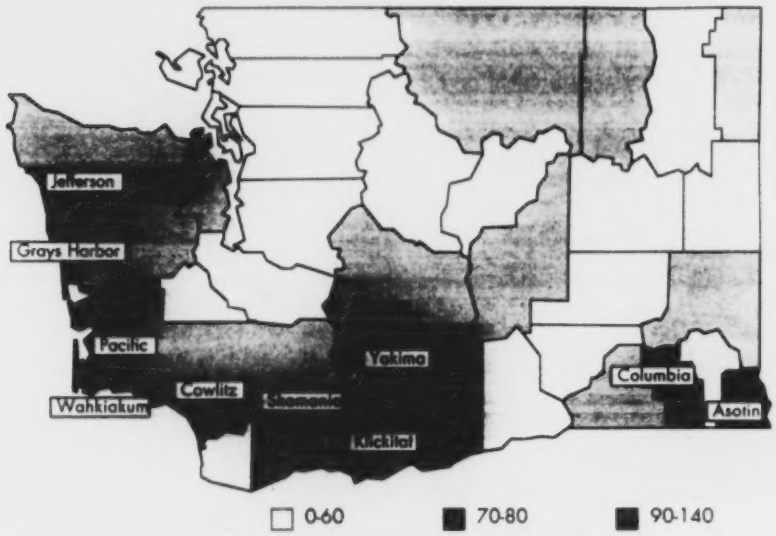
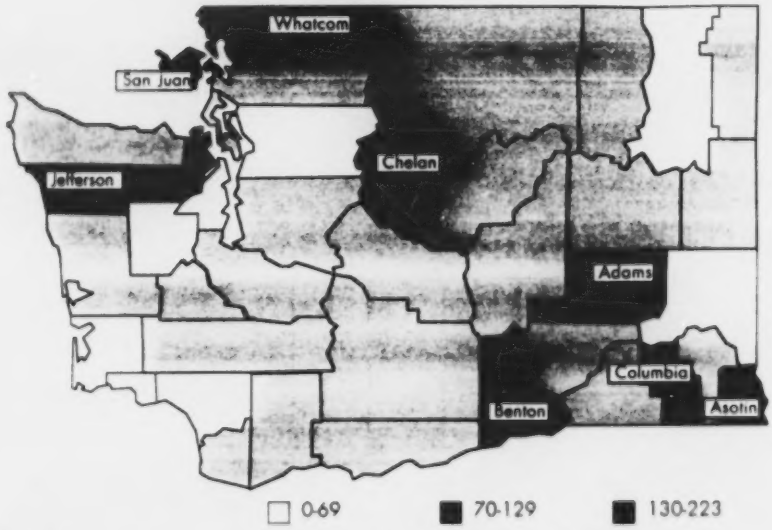
Referrals to Child Protective Services per 1,000 Children
Washington, 1995



Counties in the western and southwestern regions of Washington show child abuse rates that are nearly twice as high as the state average of 58 referrals per 1,000 children.

Juvenile Arrest Rates per 1,000 Children 10-17
Washington, 1994



Juvenile arrest rates in Washington are fairly uniform across counties. Only a few counties have very high or very low rates.

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SOURCES

Washington's Children: How Are We Doing?

Pages 5-10

The Bigger Story – Data on suicide, cancer, homicide, firearm deaths, motor vehicle deaths, infant mortality, births to school-age girls, births to unmarried women, and divorce: the Washington State Department of Health Center for Health Statistics (DOHCHS). Data on children in out-of-home care: Washington State Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS); data on children living in jail: Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, *1995 Juvenile Justice Report*. Data on child abuse and neglect: Child Protective Services. Data on suicide, smoking, gun carrying, drunk driving, and poverty: DOHCHS and U.S. Census. Data on insufficient resources, U.S. Census.

Protecting our Children – Data on prenatal care: DOHCHS. Data on immunizations, DOH Office of Immunization and Tuberculosis Services. All other data: 1995 Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors, *Analytic Report*, RMC Research Corp. for Washington State DOH, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Family and Community

Pages 11-14

Key Indicators – Data on births to unmarried women and teen birth rate: DOHCHS. Data on children not living with fathers: Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors. Data on children in out-of-home care: DCFS.

Trend graphs – Data on births to unmarried women and teen pregnancy, birth and abortion rates: DOHCHS. Data on children in out-of-home care: DCFS.

Story graphs – Data on what 8th graders say, risk factors, and protective factors: Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors.

Maps – Data on two-parent families: U.S. Census. Data on births to unmarried women: DOHCHS.

Economic Well-being

Pages 15-18

Key Indicators – Data on poverty and unemployment: U.S. Census.

Trend graphs – Data on average wages, income, high- and low-wage jobs, and employment growth: Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting Division.

Story graphs – Data on minimum cost of raising a family: U.S. Department of Labor. Data on children in poverty and children with no employed parents: U.S. Census.

Maps – Data on children on state assistance: DSHS Office of Research and Data Analysis. Data on children with no employed parents: U.S. Census.

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Health

Pages 23-32

Key Indicators – Data on low birthweight births, suicides, and prenatal care: DOHCHS. Data on HIV Seroprevalence: DOH Division of HIV/AIDS. Data on immunizations: DOH Office of Immunization and Tuberculosis Services.
Trend graphs – Data on infant mortality, childhood mortality, low birthweight, suicide, and prenatal care: DOHCHS.

Story graphs – Data on unhealthy behaviors and substance use: DOHCHS. Data on children with disabilities: U.S. Centers for Disease Control Survey of Income and Program Participation (1991-92).
Maps – Data for both maps from DOHCHS.

Education

Pages 23-26

Key Indicators – Data on public school enrollment: OSPI. Data on student-teacher ratio: Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting Division. Data on working students: Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors.
Trend graphs – Data on test scores and special education: OSPI.

Story graphs – Data on high school graduates and unmet need: Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting Division. Data on extra-school activities: Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors. Data on test scores: OSPI.
Maps – Data on test scores and school enrollment: OSPI.

Safety and Security

Pages 27-30

Key Indicators – Data on child abuse: Child Protective Services (CPS). Data on unintentional injury mortality and firearm deaths: DOHCHS. Data on juvenile arrest rates: *1995 Juvenile Justice Report*.
Trend graphs – Data on child abuse: CPS. Data on unintentional injuries, homicides, and firearm-related deaths: DOHCHS. Data on juvenile incarceration: Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, 1995 *Juvenile Justice Report*.

Story graphs – Data on safety-related behaviors, violence-related behaviors, and increase in violence: Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors. Data on domestic violence and youth violent crime arrests: *Trends in At-Risk Behaviors of Youth in Washington*, Washington State Institute for Public Policy, The Evergreen State College.
Maps – Data on child abuse rates: CPS. Data on arrest rates: *1995 Juvenile Justice Report*.

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WASHINGTON KIDS COUNT

This is the fifth annual report on *The State of Washington's Children*. It was produced by the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine in collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy and Management of the Graduate School of Public Affairs. This report is part of the Washington Kids Count Project, which receives major funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Boeing Company and the City of Seattle.

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